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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002157

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [IZ](#) [KS](#)  
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ: WHAT THE ROK WILL/WON'T DO  
AND NEEDS FROM US

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: On July 16, MOFAT North America DG Cho Byung-jae conveyed the following ROKG decisions to POLMC regarding South Korea's planned 2008 role in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- The ROK will withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2007.
- In place of those troops, the ROKG would establish a PRT in Parwan staffed by civilians (which will not require National Assembly approval), as long as security is provided by the United States.
- The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) would train and equip Afghani policemen and participate in the Border Management Initiative Training Program, but the ROK would be unable to provide military equipment to Afghanistan.
- The ROK will provide a \$25 million long-term, low-interest loan to construct a 30 mile electrical transmission line from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan and is asking the Asian Development Bank to provide joint funding for a second 200 mile long transmission line.

DG Cho said the ROK has already carried out the necessary survey in Uzbekistan and will now send a survey team to Afghanistan in early August. Cho asked that Washington tell Seoul as soon as possible whether the USG prefers a continued ROK military presence in Iraq or a continued ROK military presence in Afghanistan, as it will soon be finalizing its decisions regarding both deployments. END SUMMARY

WHAT THE ROK WILL AND WON'T DO IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2008  
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12. (C) Following up on Foreign Minister Song Min-soon's July 12 meeting with the Ambassador, MOFAT North American Affairs

Director General Cho Byung-jae met with POLMC on July 16 to formally convey the ROK position on its continuing role in Afghanistan. DG Cho began by stating that he was instructed to officially respond to the June 2007 U.S. proposal on ways in which the ROK might continue to contribute to stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. He said the U.S. proposal, presented to MOFAT during the June 6-8 visit to Seoul by Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless, had received full and careful consideration within the South Korean Government. He then presented the POLMC with the following ROKG decisions regarding the ROK presence in both Iraq and Afghanistan:

-- The ROK has contributed over \$160 million to reconstruction and stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and will continue to support that important undertaking.

-- In keeping with the express will of the National Assembly, the ROK will withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2007.

-- In place of those troops, the ROKG wishes to establish a ROK-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) headquartered in Bagram Airbase and operating in the Parwan province of Afghanistan. That PRT would be staffed by civilians but would include several ROK military officers who would serve as military liaisons. The sending of civilian personnel (and military liaisons) to Afghanistan will not require National Assembly approval. The sending of military personnel will.

-- Civilian medical personnel will replace the ROK military medical team at the hospital at Bagram Airbase so that the

health services provided at that facility would continue to be available to Afghan citizens in that area.

-- In addition, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) would undertake to bring Afghani policemen to Korea where it would train and equip them.

-- KOICA would also participate in the Border Management Initiative Training Program, sending experts and equipment to Kabul for that purpose.

-- The ROKG would work to increase KOICA's funding for civilian projects in Afghanistan, but for domestic political reasons would be unable to provide military equipment to the Afghan Armed Forces.

-- The ROKG would do its best to encourage Korean companies to undertake more private-sector economic activity in Afghanistan.

#### WHAT THE ROK WILL DO TO HELP BRING ELECTRICITY TO AFGHANISTAN

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13. (C) Turning to the effort to link up an abundance of electricity in Uzbekistan with the severe need for it in Afghanistan, DG Cho reported that the ROKG had now twice sent a survey team to Uzbekistan and had concluded that it was willing to provide funding and assistance for the completion of two electrical transmission lines. The first, he said, would be a 30 mile span from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan that would be funded with a \$25 million loan from the ROK's Economic Development Cooperation Fund. That assistance would be in the form of a long-term, low-interest loan, Cho explained. In addition, he said the ROK planned to ask the Asian Development Bank to provide joint funding for a second transmission line that would cross over 200 miles in northern Uzbekistan.

#### WHAT THE ROK NEEDS FROM THE UNITED STATES IN AFGHANISTAN

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14. (C) DG Cho went on to explain that because security of its citizens working in Afghanistan is a critical issue to the ROKG, and since it would be difficult to secure popular support for relying on security from non-allied countries,

the ROK would request the United States to provide the security for its proposed PRT. He noted that the U.S. was already providing a ring of security around Bagram Airbase, so no additional U.S. security personnel would be needed for that purpose.

15. (C) Before the ROKG makes its final decision on South Korea's continuing role in Afghanistan, it plans to send a survey team there in early August. The ROKG would like to receive the USG's response before that occurs. The survey team may also require some U.S. assistance while it is on the ground in Afghanistan, Cho added.

#### WHAT THE ROK WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT U.S. PLANS AND PRIORITIES IN IRAQ

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16. (C) Echoing Foreign Minister Song's reftel request, DG Cho asked that the USG share more details of its 2008 plan for Iraq with the South Korean government. He also asked that Washington tell Seoul as soon as possible whether the USG prefers to see a continued ROK military presence in Iraq or in Afghanistan. Cho said it was his impression that Iraq

was a higher priority, indicating the ROK was considering keeping at least some of its troops in Iraq, while pulling all of its troops out of Afghanistan. Alternatively, Cho indicated the ROK might consider doing the reverse if that was an incorrect assumption, and if Washington in fact had a stronger preference for a continued ROK military presence in Afghanistan. In that event, however, Cho said the ROK would likely withdraw its Zaytun unit from Irbil.

#### COMMENT

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17. (C) POLMC expressed appreciation for the South Korean government's careful consideration of the USG request for a continued ROK role in Afghanistan. He welcomed its willingness to lead a PRT, increase KOICA's training of Afghan police and border guards, and provide funding and assistance to the Uzbekistan-to-Afghanistan electrification project, but pushed back on the withdrawal of ROK troops from Afghanistan, pointing out that the ROK would be the first country to remove its forces. He made it clear the USG strongly desired that the ROK extend the dispatch of its troops to both Iraq AND Afghanistan. Cho's no-nonsense response, however, made it clear that with a presidential election looming in South Korea and with National Assembly approval required for any dispatch or extension of ROK forces overseas, the ROKG felt it was unable to continue to maintain troops in both countries. Cho pointed out that approval for the extension of the Zaytun dispatch to Iraq for 2007 had been contingent upon an agreement with the National Assembly that it would withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year and "conclude" the deployment in Iraq. For that reason, the ROK clearly plans to withdraw its troops from one country or the other. Unless the U.S. Government urges it to do otherwise, the ROKG's current understanding is that we prefer they keep their troops in Iraq rather than in Afghanistan.

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